

Living Hope in Action

1 Peter 1:13-16

I. Scripture reading: 1 Peter 2

II. Hope Revisited: *We've already looked with joy at the reality of our hope in Christ, a living hope that comes with our new birth. Remember that hope is not just a wishful thought about the future – what we'd sure like to see happen. No, biblical hope is a sure and confident certainty about what is indeed going to happen based on the promises of God. What is it for which we hope? For what do you hope?*

III. Grace is coming: *The apostle commands the disciples of Jesus to hope entirely, completely and fully for the grace that is coming with Jesus when he is revealed a second time in person.*

Haven't we already received grace, though? YES!! With the first revelation (appearing, advent, coming) of the Master, a flood of grace was released from God upon the world. Remember why he was sent by the Father in the first place? "The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). He came "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), and "from the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another" (John 1:16). In fact, the message of Christ's coming and work is rightly called "the gospel of God's grace" (Acts 20:24). We have received so much already as a people because of our Master's first coming. What else could we possibly hope to receive from God?

A whole lot! In fact, what is in store for the people of God is to be the focus of our entire hope in life. When our Master returns, we shall be saved from every enemy, we will be resurrected to live forever, we'll be given a share in the tree of life, we'll have a permanent place in the service and presence of God, we'll join our Master in his new creation, and we'll even reign with him. Even a cursory reading of Revelation leaves the reader with numerous reasons to joyfully hope in what is promised to those who cling to Jesus Christ in this world. If you do not know what is promised to you – to us – how can you fully place your hope in those promises being fulfilled? Study, discuss, ask, listen, teach and meditate upon the promises made to you about your endless future. Remember, you have an inheritance awaiting you that is imperishable, incorruptible and unfading (1 Peter 1:4). If you think the grace you've experienced up to now has been amazing, strap in and get ready to be blown away by the grace that is waiting for us right around the corner of time and space!

IV. Forward or backward? *Our Master, through the apostle, is calling us to live as a people with eyes fixed on the One who is before us. We are not to keep gazing backward, at the people we once were and to "conform once again to the sinful desires" we once had when we lived in ignorance. How can we go back to the ways that once ruled over us knowing that they were destroying us and keeping us from the "glorious and inexpressible joy" that is ours in Christ? How can we choose all over again to betray and defy the One we love and trust (though we've never seen him, nor do we see him now)? What once ruled us must not rule us now because we are looking ahead to the people we are meant to be. Our eyes are fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). He is not to be found in the filth of our past sinfulness; no, they are in the tomb of our forgiven past. You left them there (remember?) in the waters of baptism. You were raised to live a new life, just as your Master did not remain in the tomb but was raised to live again.*

Child of God, you have been called to obedience. Peter has already made it clear that we were chosen by God "for obedience to Christ" (1 Peter 1:20). How can you return to the darkness, loneliness and blindness of disobedience and unbelief all over again? Peter's connection between embracing our future hope and severing our ties with past disobedience is echoed in his second letter (read 2 Peter 3:11-14). Disciple, you have been given new birth into a living hope. You are a new person who is created to live in an entirely new creation. For now, you are in (not of!) a world that remains shrouded in the darkness of the "old order of things" (Rev. 21:4). You live by faith, and so you live a life of trusting obedience. Your every decision to obey is truly rooted in the reality of what God has promised. Listen to your Father: embrace the grace He's already showered on you and live in the confident expectation of all that He's holding in store for you. Amen.